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Ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus.

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Rt. Rev. Adelhelm Odermatt, O. S. B.

ST. BENEDICT'S ABBEY and Mt. Angel have suffered an irreparable loss; for our Father and Founder has gone out from among us. His cheery smile and hearty welcome, we shall know no more. The sound of his footsteps in the cloister and on the stairs is stilled; his voice that rang out in choir and the pulpit is hushed forever. On All Saint's Day—a day of joyful triumph for the Church he had prayed in the Office and in Mass: "To Him who sitteth upon the Throne and to the Lamb: benediction, thanksgiving and honor," when God's angel bid him rest from his labors. Slowly his life ebbed away under the force of the apoplectic stroke, and on Saturday he went to receive his crown.

Charles Odermatt was born near Stans in Switzerland on December 10, 1844, of virtuous parents and the same day he received baptism.

Feeling himself called to the ecclesiastical state he entered the College connected with the Benedictine Abbey in Engelberg, not far distant. Here the Spirit of the great St. Benedict, that pervaded the ancient halls of the Abbey, soon took possession of the young pious man and, on finishing his philosophy in French Switzerland, he knocked at the gate of the cloister. The Abbot of Engelberg, seeing the seeds of monastic vocation in the youth, gladly admitted him to the number of his sons and a year later, in 1866, to profession with St. Adelhelm as his patron. On the completion of his theological studies he was ordained to the holy priesthood in the Cathedral of St. Gall by Bishop Greith, a learned prelate, well known for his researches in Irish history. After spending a year in perfecting himself in his studies, Father Adelhelm entered upon his duties as a professor in the College attached to the Abbey in Engelberg. But the times were very uncertain and the pestilential breath of the Kulturkampf was wafted over the boundaries from Germany. Hence when Bishop Hogan from distant Missouri earnestly asked for a monastic foundation in his diocese, the great Abbot Anselm sent two Fathers on this important mission, Fathers Frowin Conrad and Adelhelm Odermatt, who with a few postulants left the mother-house on April 27, 1873.

What must have been the hardships of such a journey in those days can be better imagined than described. The travellers were joyfully welcomed by Abbot Martin Marty and his community at St. Meinrad in Indiana; and remained there for some time to learn English. But the fields of Missouri were white unto the harvest, and filled with apostolic zeal, the two Fathers soon left the hospitable sons of St. Benedict, to go to their new home; which they named Conception in honor of the day religious life was inaugurated on the broad plains of Missouri. Some few miles distant from the modest building which served as monastery was the town of Maryville with hundreds of souls waiting for a shepherd. The Church was of the most primitive kind, and as Father Frowin placed F. Adelhelm in charge he said: "This is your stable of Bethlehem!" With all the zeal characteristic of him the good Father labored for eight years until the state of his health forced him to seek a milder climate. Directing his steps toward the Golden West he traversed all states bordering upon the Pacific in search of a spot suitable for a Benedictine monastery, and at the invitation of Archbishop Seghers, took charge of Gervais and its missions. The following year Father Adelhelm returned to Switzerland to report to his Abbott. After the superiors had heard of the needs of the Church in Oregon and of the wonderful climate and possibilities they resolved to petition Rome to erect a new Benedictine monastery in the West, and on the 15th of July, 1882, Leo XIII signed the decree of erection. The first superior was our venerable Father who with all the ardor of his soul threw himself into the arduous work before him. When one remembers that Oregon was on the outskirts of the then known world and that the means of communication were of the poorest, one is forced to admire the indomitable courage of this man of God who set to work, to found a seat of prayer and work in the heart of the forest. "Ora et Labora" was the motto of the Sons of St. Benedict of old; and in very truth such was the watchword of the indefatigable Prior and his little community of eighteen members with whom he began monastic life on October 30, 1882. On that day the words of the Divine Office were heard for the first time in the stillness of the forest, to be hushed please God only at the end of time. From the first hour of superiorship it was his constant endeavor that a truly Benedictine Spirit should flourish among his sons, as it had flourished in the mother house. A lover of silence and prayer he was a model to his brethren; never commanding anything that he had not first shown by his example.

After a short time, it soon became evident that Gervais was not suited to the development of his growing community; hence a large tract of land in the virgin forest was purchased, and in July, 1884, the community was moved to the modest monastery near what is now Mt. Angel. Here the Community with genial Prior Adelhelm expanded rapidly so that he was able to open Mt. Angel College in 1887 and the

Seminary two years later. The future looked bright and the institution was forging ahead rapidly when on May 3, 1892, a fierce fire in two hours destroyed the work of years.

Any other man would have been disheartened; not so Prior Adelhelm. He carried the Bl. Sacrament from the burning building to the little chapel on the Mount and sitting down at the organ played and sang in honor of his Divine Master. Then rising up he began to make his plans for a new and better monastery. For six long, weary years he tramped the streets of the cities on the Atlantic sea board, until on June 21, 1899, the corner stone of the present magnificent structure was laid by the new Archbishop of Oregon, Most Rev. Alex. Christie; and four years later the whole Abbey being completed the family of St. Benedict was able to enter an Institution without equal in the West. And in a great measure this was made possible by the prayers and labors of Prior Adelhelm. He had sown in tears, and now the harvest time had come, he could reap in joy. His life's work was now an accomplished fact; he had written his name in unperishable characters upon the tablets of time as St. Benedict's Father and Founder.

The following years were years of ceaseless energy and toil for his Divine Master. Missions and retreats, sermons and visits to the sick stamped him as a zealous priest, always eager and desirous of promoting God's glory and the welfare of souls. Utterly oblivious of self when God's honor was in question he delighted in nothing so much as the hardest works of the ministry; and his face fairly beamed with joy when some hardened sinner of long standing was again brought back to the feet of the master.

The snow of life's winter were now thick upon his head, and yet the fervor of youth had not abated. His zeal for the Divine Service was, if anything, greater than before. The signal for community exercises was as promptly obeyed as by the youngest novice. Morning after morning he arose at 3:30 A. M. to spend hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; and it was his pardonable boast that he never missed the celebration of Holy Mass in the 51 years of his priestly life.

On the occasion of his golden Jubilee in Religion our Holy Father Benedict XV made him a Titular Abbot in recognition of his great services to the Church in the West. This signal favor served but to re-ignite his zeal, and he was just as engaged as of yore in his Master's business when the Angel of God bid him cease from his labors.

He died quietly and peacefully on November 6, 1920, in St. Vincent's Hospital, Portland, where he had been taken from St. Joseph's Church when struck down by apoplexy after having said Mass.

Never has Mt. Angel seen such a vast throng as that which stood in sorrow at the grave of its Father and Founder. His cheery smile

and warm welcome are gone from our midst; but his memory shall be kept ever fresh and green among his friends and his children who were privileged to know and to love a great Monk and a truly zealous Priest.

—FATHER SUB-PRIOR BERNARD, O. S. B.

